

H. Baynton

A
SERMON

Preach'd At

St HELEN'S in *ABINGDON*

April 2d 1726,

On the Occasion of Opening an

O R G A N:

And A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*

At St MARY'S

On ROGATION SUNDAY,

May 15th 1726.

By JOSEPH STOCKWELL, B. D. Fellow of
Trinity-College, Oxon. *K*

OXFORD,

Printed at the THEATRE for *Sam. Wilmot*; and are to be Sold
by Messieurs *Knapton, R. Knaplack, D. Midwinter, J. Wyat,*
and *J. Apley* in *St Paul's Church-Yard*; Messieurs *Innys* in
Ludgate-Street, *J. Crockett* in *Fleet-Street*, *W. Mears* with-
out *Temple-Barr*, and *J. Roberts* in *Warwick-Lane*.

1750
SERMON

ST HELEN'S IN ARLINGTON

On the Occasion of Opening an

ORATORY

And
SERMON



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

At St Mary's

On ROGATION SUNDAY

May 17th 1750

By Joseph Stockwell, B. D. Fellow of
Trinity College, Oxon.

OXFORD

Printed by J. Sturges, at the Angel in St. Dunstons Church-yard, and sold by
Messrs. Knapton, T. Knapton, B. Knapton, in Pall-mall, and by
Messrs. B. & C. in St. Dunstons Church-yard, and by Messrs. B. & C.
in St. Dunstons Church-yard, and by Messrs. B. & C. in St. Dunstons Church-yard.

TO
ANDREW ARCHER Esq;
OF
UMBERSLADE
In the COUNTY of
WARWICK

Sir,

WERE the Composition of these Discourses suited to the Justness and Elegancy of Your Taste, I might venture to say, that I am making You an Acceptable Present; as the Subject of the former must be agreeable to You from Your known Regard to every thing, that is Sacred; and, as That of the latter favours Your Inclination to the Pleasurable Retirement of a Country Life. Indeed a Person, who has gone through many Scenes of Publick Business with so much Honour, can't withdraw from It, but with Equal Credit, and Satisfaction. As

*As the establish'd Character of Your
Ancient Family has receiv'd an addi-
tional Lustre in YOUR HANDS; 'tis
Your farther Happiness, that You can
see nothing in Prospect, which can in
Any degree Impair It. — And, who-
ever considers the promises annex'd to
That Integrity, which is eminently di-
stinguish'd by the name of Wisdom,
can't be at a loss to account for the ma-
ny Blessings, which You enjoy in such
Abundance. I have a Pleasure in ob-
serving, that Length of days is yet a
Blessing, which You have encourage-
ment given You to expect; That, and
the continuance of All the Rest, is
sincerely wish'd You by*

Sir

Your most Oblig'd,

Humble Servant

Trin. Coll. OXON.

Jan. 14. 1727.

JOSEPH STOCKWELL.



to God's House, as a Place dedicated and
 -PSAL. XCIII, latter part of the fifth Verse.

*Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord,
 for ever.*



SHALL not enquire, whether
 the *Holiness*, which is here
 said to *become* the *House* of
 God, be intended by the Royal
 Psalmist to relate primarily to
 the Place set apart for the
 Worship of God, or to the
 Persons, who resorted to, and frequented that
 Worship.

In the former Construction there ariseth from
 these Words this Proposition — There is an
Holiness, which belongeth to God's *House*, as 'tis
 a Place dedicated and set apart to *His* Service.

In the latter Interpretation the Words are to
 be reduced to this Proposition — There is
 an *Holiness*, which *becometh*, and is required of
 every Person, who pays an Attendance on That
 Service.

'Tis probable, that Both these Senses are in-
 cluded in this Assertion of the Royal Penman;

as the Former of them contains matter of undoubted Truth, and the Latter of positive Duty: The Former Proposition, which I shall chiefly make the Subject of this Discourse, directing us, what thoughts we are to entertain of the *House* of God; and the Latter shewing us, how we are to behave and demean our selves in It.

There is an *Holiness* then, which belongeth to God's *House*, as 'tis a Place dedicated and set apart to His Service. In treating which Proposition I shall

Ist, State the Notion of this *Holiness*; and

II^{dy}, Shew, that it belongs to the *House* of God.

First, as to the Nature of this *Holiness*, Our Blessed Lord has determined the Point, that *Holiness* cannot be ascribed to any Created thing, but in a restrain'd and limited Sense. *There is none Good but One, that is God.* 'Tis His Royal Prerogative, His Incommunicable Attribute, to have All Perfection *Essential* only to Himself. His Nature derives no Excellency from any thing *without Him*; neither doth He (I might say, nor can He) communicate His Perfections to any Creature in the same manner, in that Transcendent Height of Excellence, that Himself enjoys them. God only then is Holy, (i. e.) He only is So by the Necessity of His own Nature, by the Underiv'd Accomplishments of His Perfect Essence, and in an Infinite Degree.

All the *Holiness* then, that any Creature is capable of, is such, as is either immediately de-

riv'd

riv'd from Him, or else flows from the Relation, it some way or other bears to Him. In the former sense Men are said to be *Holy in all manner of Conversation and Godliness*, when He is pleas'd by the powerfull Operations of His Grace to transform them in some Degree into His Likeness, to impart to them some small Ray of His Own Brightness, to stamp and imprint on 'em, tho' but a faint and weak, Image of Himself. The Best of all this is but a Copy, a very distant Resemblance of the Original. We imitate Him here, as we see Him, but *darkly*; and may, thro' His Assistance, become *Holy, as He is* so in some small Degree of Likeness, but in no Degree of Proportion.

As God only then is Holy Essentially, Incommunicably, and Infinitely; and as Man, in a very low Degree, and in a derived manner, not within the Reach of any Comparison, makes some very small and remote Approaches towards this Excellency of his Maker, in endeavouring to *cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit*, and to copy out, at best but an Imperfect, Draught of that Inimitable Pattern; so there is an External and Relative Holiness, which belongs, and is appropriated to Every thing, that has a more immediate Reference and Regard to Him or His Service. Such is the Authority and Majesty of God, that not only *His Name is Holy and Reverend*, as the Psalmist speaks, what we ought every Day to pray, may be *Hallowed* by Us (i. e.) used with that Awfull Reverence, which belongs to a Name conveying to our Minds the Idea of so Great a Being; not
pass

pass commonly, or be taken in vain in our Ordinary Discourse; not be mention'd or even thought of, but as a Thing Sacred, with a Religious Pause and Serious Attention, — not only His *Law* and His *Commandment* is *Holy*, as the Apostle speaks, as it was both dictated by His Spirit, and *written with His Finger*, and therefore should be read and hearken'd to by Us with some Degree of that Respectfull Regard, of that Awfull Dread, which attended it's first Promulgation, when it was deliver'd with *Thunders* and *Lightnings* and *the Voice of the Trumpet*, when *the Mount smoked*, and *the People trembled*; — Such, I say, is the Authority and Majesty of God, that He has not only thus *magnified His Name* and His *Word* above all things, separated them from Common Use, and taught Us, that to treat either of them with Indifference is a Sacrilegious Prophanation; but He has even appropriated *Times* and *Places* to Himself: has pitch't a Fence and Guard about Them; and has made Them Sacred, by calling Them His *OWN*. — Thus He commanded His People to *esteem one Day above another*; He Sequestred a certain Portion of their Time from the Business of Common Life, by *Blessing* and *Hallowing* It at It's Dedication, by Honouring It with the Name of His *Sabbath* and His *Holy Day*, to shew them, That He had set It apart to Himself, as a Time Sanctified and Sacred, *Holy to the Lord* and *Honourable*; as a Day, on which His *Pleasure* was to be *done*.

In

In the same manner and on the same Account there is an Holiness peculiar to those Places, which are *built for the Honour of His Name*, for the Performance of His Service, ——— to those Places, which *the Lord our God hath chosen to place His Name there*. This is That Holiness of Relation, which is ascribed to them by God ——— when He commands Us to *Reverence His Sanctuary*, as well as to *Keep His Sabbaths*; and for the same Reason, Because, saith He, *I am the Lord* ——— (i. e.) because His Dignity is such, as derives an Excellence, imprints a Character on, whatever is employ'd in His Service; and (like the *Wall* mention'd by the Prophet *Ezekiel*) *makes a Separation between the Sanctuary and the prophane Place*.

It is readily allow'd, That neither Times nor Places are capable of any Inherent or Intrinsick Holiness, in Respect of which *Every Day* and *Every Place* is to be *esteem'd alike*. But surely, He, that appointed the *Seasons*, and created the *Earth*, may reserve, what Portion of Either He pleaseth, to Himself, may separate and distinguish this Holy Inclosure, and make it His Own Property, may secure it from Violation and Invasion by asserting His Claim to it, may Hallow it by It's Use, and Honour it with His Name. Our Regard to these Places terminates not in Themselves, but flows wholly from the Relation, They bear to God, and from the Right, He has in them. 'Tis not *the Temple*, but *Him*, that dwelleth therein, whom we make the Object of our Hope, Faith, and Worship. The external Reverence, which, we are persuaded, is due
to

to the *House* of God, is as far remov'd from a Superstitious Adoration of the Creature, as from a Contemptuous Prophanation of the *Hallowed Thing*. But, whilst we *abhor Idols*, we would not *commit Sacrilege*.

To enquire therefore in the Second Place, In what Respects the *House* of God is *Holy*, is the same thing, as to enquire, In what Respects it is His *House*. And, to waive all other Arguments, I conceive, 'tis strictly and properly His *House*, as 'tis Design'd and Dedicated to His Service.

The Royal Author of this Psalm was expressly forbidden by God to attempt the building an *House* to His Holy Name, because he had *been a Man of War, and had shed Blood abundantly*. That Honour was reserved for Solomon, to whom God promised on that account to *give Rest from all his Enemies* on every side, that he might not want Leisure to attend the Care, nor Abilitys to defray the Expence of that Undertaking — *The Work is Great, for the Palace is not for Man, but for the Lord God*. However God Almighty was pleased to accept of the Pious Intention of Holy David, tho' He would not permit him to put it in Execution. — *Thou didst well, that it was in thine Heart* — and, as a Token, that He approv'd of this Religious Design, receiv'd at his Hands the Materials and Treasures, which He had provided for the carrying on that Work. These He had collected and prepared at an immense Charge, notwithstanding the great Necessitys and Exigencies of his Government, in the Time of his *Trouble or Poverty*.

And;

And, when He appointed 'em to this Holy Use, He expresseth himself in such a manner, as plainly shews, that They were no longer to be esteem'd as a part of His Possessions; that the Tenure and Property of them was alter'd; that the Right, He had in them, was now transfer'd to God Almighty. — *I have prepared with all my might for the House of my God.* — Moreover, because I have set my Affection to the House of my God, I have Given of my Own proper Good of Gold and Silver over and above all, that I have prepared for the Holy House. We see, that, What was before His Own proper Good, is now a Gift to God, — the Devoted Thing, which is most Holy unto the Lord, which could not be sold or redeem'd, nor in any the least part resum'd without Robbery and Prophanation.

The same thing is evident from the manner, in which the King exhorts his Subjects to joyn with Him in this Pious Liberality. — *Who then is willing to Consecrate his Service this Day unto the Lord? Who am I, and what is my People, that we should be able to Offer so willingly after this sort?* — So that, what was given to this Holy Use, was a Consecrated Offering, became alienated from its former Owners, and the whole Right of it was vested in God Almighty. And This lastly is farther Evident from the Devout Form, in which David makes a Solemn Oblation of the Treasures, He had collected, in which he acknowledges God's antecedent Right in them, as He was Lord of All; and His acquired Property, as they were now particularly appropriated to His Service; — *All things come of Thee, and of Thine*

Thine Own have we given Thee. O Lord, our God, all this Store, that we have prepared to build Thee an House for Thy Holy Name, cometh of Thine Hand, and is All Thine Own. As for me, in the uprightness of my Heart I have willingly offer'd All these things. — In the Uprightness of His Heart, and Willingly — Expressing His Joy, that God would accept the Offering, and His Sincere Resolution never to resume it.

These Materials and Treasures were not more Piously offered by the Father, than they were Religiously preserv'd and Faithfully apply'd by the Son — Who, as the Text tells us, brought in All the things, which David His Father had dedicated, and put them among the Treasures of the House of the Lord. And no sooner was the whole Work entirely finish'd, but we find God in express Terms asserting His Own Right and Claim to it. — I have chosen this Place to Myself for an House of Sacrifice. I have chosen and Sanctified This House, that My Name may be there.

Was it therefore no Contradiction under the Law, that God, who is the King of All the Earth, should be capable of acquiring any New Property? Could He then be said to have a more immediate Right or Interest in one thing, than in another? Did that Right devolve upon Him entirely from the Pious Bequests, the Free-Will-Offerings, the Voluntary Contributions of his Creatures? Were these Oblations accepted with Such Marks of Approbation, as tending to promote God's Honour, tho' in a less perfect Service? Were they made irrevocable to the Former Owners, unalienable under a Curse, reli-

giously

giously to be *tendered to God*, as, what bore His *Image and Supercription*, and from Their Stamp confess'd their Owner? Was, what was once Deposited in the Royal Treasury, esteem'd a Sacred and Hallowed Part of the Divine Revenue, superseding All Former Claims, and precluding All Future Demands? Did God, who never Needed any thing at the hands of His Creatures, on all occasions recommend a *Liberal Devoting* of Part of their Substance to His Use, from Whom They received All? Did He accept of this Separation of their Goods, as a Proof of their Regard to Himself, and as an Acknowledgment of the Tenure, by which they held All the Rest? Did These Gifts rise in their Value and Acceptance from the Proportion, they bore to the Circumstances of the Persons, by whom they were severally offer'd; would not David presume to *offer to the Lord His God of that, which cost Him nothing*; and did the *poor Widow*, in our Saviour's Account, *Cast in More to the Offerings of God, than They All*, who had *cast in Much out of their Abundance*? — Where then is the Contradiction or Absurdity in supposing, that God may *even Now* be specially entitled to, whatever is thus sever'd from Common Use; set apart for those Employments, in which His own Honour is as much Now concern'd as Ever, for Works of Piety and those of Charity, not less delightfull to Him Now, than in any Former Age, nor less a Proof of our Love and Obedience? For why is it more inconsistent with God's Universal Empire, that One thing should be more His distinct and separate Property, than

Another, than it is, that Christians, who are in Covenant with Him, should be more his *Peculiar People*, than the Heathen?

That God has indeed such a Right, and that too under the Gospel, is included in the very Notion of the Sin of *Sacrilege*, which *St Paul* in a remarkable Gradation placeth above That of *Idolatry*. Why may it not then be affirmed, that the Invading That Right is a *Robbing of God*; or that That Robbery has a *Curse* equally entail'd upon it; or that to *Devout That*, which is *Holy*, to take to ourselves the Houses of God in Possession, to make a Spoil of these Vessels of Honour, Sanctified and made meet for the Master's Use, is still, in *Solomon's* Expression, a Snare to a Man; a Snare, that exhibits the Bait, but hides the Danger: a Snare like that, into which *Achan* was surpris'd, who conceal'd the *Wedge of Gold*, the *Accursed Thing*, with which he, that was taken, was to be burnt with Fire?

'Tis true indeed, that God doth not Now transact with His Creatures Affairs of this Sort as a Party, in a Visible and Publick manner; He doth not Condition, or Covenant with them, that the Building an Altar should suspend a Pestilence; He doth not publicly assert His own Claim to it, when built, nor pursue the Invader with immediate Vengeance: But then 'tis as true, that What He requir'd by immediate Message, or express Revelation under the Law, He may Now suggest to us be our Duty by the powerfull Motions of His Holy Spirit; that the Necessity of Places set apart for His Worship, and his Property in them is founded in the Nature and Reason

of things, and needs not an Explicit Law to enforce it; that, under a Dispensation establish'd on much higher Sanctions, than those of Temporal Rewards and Punishments, the Impunity of the Person is no Proof of the Innocency of the Action; and, that, if God doth not restrain *the Sons of Eli* from defiling the dwelling places of His Holy Name, nor immediately punish them for the Outrage, This is no more an Argument against the Sacredness of those Places, than it is an Argument against the Holiness of His Name, that He suffers *It* to be blasphem'd, and generally by the Same Persons; nor a Proof, that He will hold Them Guiltless in One Case more, than in the Other.

But, if we are not allow'd to suppose any Analogy between the *Mercy-Seat*, and the *Christian Altar*; If it will not be granted from Arguments drawn from Reason and the Parity of the Case, that God is Now concern'd to vindicate the Places of His Worship from Invasion and Contempt, as having no such Property in them, or Regard for them, as He had Formerly; let us see, what farther Light *the Gospel* will afford us for the Resolution of these Questions — Whether a Dedicating part of our Substance to the Uses of Religion has not a Place among the Christian Dutys; — Whether things thus Dedicated do not thereby become Holy; — Whether Places employ'd in the Service of God are not to be rank'd in that Number; and — Whether, *what God bath thus Cleansed*, we may afterwards call *Common*.

And

And here I might observe, that the Relative Holiness of things, which have any special Regard to God, is, not obscurely, intimated by our Blessed Saviour, when He tells us, that to swear by the *Heaven* is to swear by *God's Throne*; by the *Earth* is by *His footstool*; by *Jerusalem* is by the *City of the Great King*; by the *Altar* is by *all things, that are thereon*; by the *Temple* is by *Him, that dwelleth therein*. All these things merely from the Relation, they bear to God, are here said to make our swearing by them to have the Form and Solemnity of a Religious Oath.

I might urge the Instance before alluded to of the particular Approbation given by our Lord to the well-meant Bounty of the *poor Widow*, that *threw in her two mites into the Treasury*, call'd by our Saviour *the Offerings of God*, as being dedicated to the Service and Repair of the Temple.

I might observe, that in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, among many other Divine Precepts, confessedly Evangelical, we have a very particular Direction for a Christian's Behaviour, on the Occasion of *bringing his Gift to the Altar, and there remembering, that his Brother had ought against him*. We see, that not only the *Altar*, but the very Intention did so far *Sanctifie the Gift*, that he was no more at liberty to Resume it, than he was allow'd to Offer it, whilst he lay under a moral Disqualification. He was to *leave there his Gift before the Altar, and go his way; first be reconciled to his brother, and Then come, and Offer his Gift*. Justice and Charity were necessary to render That Acceptable, which his Design had before made Sacred.

But

But to proceed ——— When, according to the Prediction of the Royal Prophet, *in the Day of Christ's Power*, soon after His Ascension into Heaven, and Investiture with the Regal Office, *the People offer'd him Free-will Offerings with an Holy Worship, in selling their Lands and Houses, and laying the Price of them at the Apostles Feet* for the Support and Relief of the Infant and Distress'd Church, we have the Preacher's Assertion, that ——— *Better is it, that thou shouldst not vow, than, that thou shouldst vow, and not pay,* ——— sadly exemplify'd in the tremendous Instance of *Ananias*. He *kept back* (the Original expresseth it *purloyn'd*) part of, what Himself had dedicated to God, and Which therefore was no longer *his own*, nor in his *own Power* and Disposal; and robbed That God, to Whom he *lyed*. What the Punishment of his Sacrilegious Prevarication was, I need not say: 'Twas so Exemplary, that the Text informs us ——— *Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many, as heard it.*

If any of these Instances prove, that a Christian may assign, and set over part of his Substance to the Uses of Religion, and, that God will receive it as an acceptable Service done to Himself; there is Yet more Reason to believe, that No Offering of this sort is so pleasing to Him, as, What in it's Design and Tendency conduceth directly to the Advancement of Piety and Devotion; and that, in the Words of *Nehemiah* ——— He will especially remember us concerning This, and wipe not out the Good Deeds, that we have done for the House of our God, and for the
Offices

Offices thereof. These *Gates of Sion*, which the Lord loveth more, than all the *Dwellings of Jacob*, as They are eminently design'd for the *Honour of His Name*, and to make *His Praise Glorious*, are chosen and accepted by Him to be an *Habitation for Himself*; and, as the Apostle strongly intimates, (in comparing our *Bodys* to the *Temple of the Holy Ghost*) they are not *our Own*; they are not of Private Property or Secular Use, but are distinguish'd from Other Places, as Christians are from Other Men, by God's Possessing and Owning them. Accordingly we have an eminent Instance of our Saviour's *Zeal* for God's *House*, in regard to a Prophanation of the outer Court of the Temple, not Sacred to any Legal Expiations, but used only for Prayer and Instruction, and Common to Jew and Gentile — *My House*, saith He, *shall be call'd the House of Prayer to All Nations* — in a literal quotation from the Prophet *Isaiab*. The Prediction, thus commented on by Our Saviour's Practice and Application, may be understood to signify, that, when, (according to the Prophecy of *Daniel*, in which the Destruction of the Temple is foretold,) God would *cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease*, which were peculiar to One People, and had Now their Full Determination; He would still have an *House of Prayer*, not confin'd either to *Mount Gerizim* or *Jerusalem*, but, which should be Common to *All Nations*; and that This *House of Prayer* was as properly *His*, as That of *Sacrifice*. In consequence of This, We find *St Paul*, who had before said — *If any man Defile the Temple of God, Him shall God destroy,*

stroy, — afterwards 1 Cor. xi. 22. severely charging the *Corinthians* with *Despising the Church of God*, as That Word signifies the Place used for the Performance of Divine Offices; which appears from the Opposition, 'tis There and v. 34. set in to *Houses* of their *Own*, In which they were to perform the Common Offices of Life, and from What is before mention'd v. 20. — of their coming together into One Place, — and v. 18. of their coming together in the Church. — Their Crime was not *Discerning the Lord's Body*; and a very great Aggravation of it is made by the Apostle to lie in their not Discerning the Lord's House.

To conclude — As *Holiness*, according to the Notion of it before stated, may, not improperly, be ascribed to any Created thing, that is separated from Common Use, and stands in any special Relation to God; as this Separation and Relation imply God's Property in the Thing, exclusive of All Other Claims; as the Christian Service is not so Spiritual, but that there is a Necessity of Some Place to perform it in; and it cannot with any Reason be affirm'd, that, the more Spiritual the Service is, the less Sacred is the Place; as (the Nature of that Service requiring, that the Affairs and Business of Common Life should no ways mix themselves, or interfere with it) Our Saviour has forbidden Us to make His Father's House an House of Merchandise, and would not suffer them so much as to carry any Vessel thro' the Temple; as we are requir'd in our Christian Offices to have Fellowship one with another in offering up our joynt Prayers and Praises

to God; as we find the Apostles, after our Saviour's Ascension, *continuing daily in the Temple and in Solomon's Porch*, and after their departure thence by a *River-side*, where Prayer was wont to be made; as the Christians immediately succeeding Them always frequented the known and stated Places of Devotion, as far as their Safety and Circumstances would admit; as in after Ages the Publick Places of Religion have always touch't and affected the Best of Men with an Awfull Reverence, and often the Worst with a secret Dread and Horror; — In a Word, as we have an *Altar*, from which infinitely greater Blessings are dispens't, than They receiv'd, who served the *Tabernacle*; — as this *Altar*, at which we pay Attendance, by an Express Designation in a Civil Sense, by a Solemn Dedication in a Religious one, is set apart solely to the Service of God; — there can be no Impropriety in affirming, that the Place, whereon we stand, is *Holy Ground*; or saying (in the Reverential Exclamation of Jacob) *How dreadful is This Place! This is none other, than the House of God, and This is the Gate of Heaven!*

Having endeavour'd to establish the Proposition I laid down, by stating the Nature of this *Holiness*, and by shewing You, that it belongs to the *House of God* — I proceed to take notice of such Inferences, as arise from, what has been said.

1st, If there be an *Holiness* belonging to the *House of God*, then no pretence of Private Devotion can excuse our Attendance on the Publick Service and Offices of Religion. I shall

wave

we make any Comparison between the Excellency of the Private and the Publick Worship of God, as They are Both of 'em made Equally and Indispensably our Duty; and shall only observe, that, how pious soever our Behaviour has been in the *Closet*, we are obliged to joyn in the Open Profession of Christianity, by coming, where *two or three are gathered together in His Name*, and, where He has promised to *be in the midst of them*; and to pray to, and *praise the Lord in the Congregation*.

2dly, If the *House of God be Holy*, It ought to be approach'd to, and used with Reverence. If *Moses* was commanded to *put off his Shoes from off his Feet*, because *the place*, whereon he stood, was *Holy Ground*; ——— if the meek and humble *Jesus* *overthrew the Seats of them, that sold Doves*, which were afterwards themselves to have been made *Holy* by being offer'd to God, and *drove the impious Market-men out of the Temple*, with such Tokens of Indignation, as never appear'd in Him, but in That Instance; ——— Let us take Care, that we don't provoke the Like Resentment by any Lightness or Indecency in Our Behaviour there; or by a Refusal to shew those External Marks of Reverence, which are used, and always understood to denote the Inward Value and Regard, we have for It. *Have we not Houses of our Own to eat and to drink in? — This is God's House, in the Which it pleaseth Him to dwell*; and to prophane or violate it by any designed Disrespect (called by *St Paul* *Despising the Church of God*) is a Crime, like That of *Touching His Anointed*.

3dly, If the *House* of God be *Holy*, and be made So by being His House, 'Tis a laudable Instance of our Zeal for God's Honour to contribute our Endeavours for the Decent Ornament and Furniture of It. The *House* of God in This Respect may be compar'd to the *King's Daughter*, mention'd by the Psalmist; whilst it is Her Highest Perfection, that She is *All Glorious within*, has the Principal Grace and Ornament of Internal Purity both in Doctrine and Worship; yet 'tis no small part of Her Commendation, that, when She is brought to the *King*, Her *Cloathing is of wrought Gold* — Valuable, but not Light; Decent, without Affectation; and, in a Word, Such a Garb and Attire, as, by bespeaking the Dignity of the Person, may create Respect and Reverence in the Beholders.

4thly, If the *House* of God be *Holy*, there is an *Holiness* especially requir'd in All those, who frequent it. Into Heaven nothing Sinfull or Unclean can enter; because, whatever is so, is a direct Contradiction to His Nature, Whose Throne and the Principal Place of Whose Residence It is. In a Lower Degree, the *Gate*, that leads to It, is the Seat of the Same *High and Holy One's* abode; as He may very properly be said to be especially there Present, where He doth most eminently dispense His Graces and Blessings. For, till we come to Heaven, where can we see His *Power and Glory* Manifested in so Great a Degree, as we may see 'em in the *Sanctuary*? For the same Reason then (not only because of the *Angels*, as St Paul argues, but because of

of the Presence of the Great God) whenever we approach His House, we should, as far as humane Infirmitys will allow of it, endeavour to carry nothing into His Immediate Sight, that, *He is of Purer Eyes, than to behold.*

And if the *House* of God be thus *Holy*, and our Behaviour in It ought to be So too, I shall in the Fifth and Last Place Infer, That we May lawfully, and Ought to Use All such Helps, as may tend to further and assist us in our Devotions. And of This kind is That, which has given us the Joyfull Occasion of being Assembled together *at This Time*. If the Rendring to God Our Just Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving be an Essential part of Divine Worship; If it has been esteem'd by Writers of Great Judgment to be the most Acceptable part of it, as it seems to express our Disinterested Gratitude, and without any Selfish View to terminate Solely in God's Honour; how should we endeavour to perform This Highest Act of Religious Adoration in the Utmost *Beauty* and Perfection of *Holiness*! To discharge This Duty in a Becoming and Acceptable manner, How do's the Royal Author of the Book of Psalms exert All the Powers of His Soul, command All the Organs of His Body; call upon the Irrational, and even Inanimate part of the Creation, to joyn together to make up a Grand Consort in celebrating the Praises of their Creator! These Latter indeed are no more, than Unactive Instruments of God's Honour. *The Heavens and the Firmament, in which there is neither Speech nor Language, declare the Glory of God, as they shew forth His Handy-work.*

Fire

Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storm, to All which *He has given a Law, which shall not be broken, set forth His Praise,* as they fulfill *His Word.* But Man is the Only Creature of This World capable of giving Actual Glory to God. From All Other things indeed God Receives Honour; but 'tis Man only, that can Pay it Him willingly and without Constraint. And surely This must needs be the most Perfect Employment of Our Nature, which makes up the Happiness of the Higher Orders of Intellectual Beings. There can't be on Earth a nearer Resemblance of the Glorify'd Assembly of *Saints and Angels and Just Men made Perfect,* than a Religious Congregation; imploy'd in the Same Exercises with Those Above; with United Hearts and Voices extolling the Praises of *the Common Father, of Whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is Named.* If God's Holy Angels, Those *Servants of His, that do His Pleasure,* are represented as Singing the *Song of Moses, and the Song of the Lamb,* and that with their *Harp*s in their Hands; This sure is a sufficient Warrant for the Lawfullness and Propriety of Musick both by Voice and Instrument in the Publick Worship of God. Can there be a more laudable Ambition, than for Us, in the humble distance of Our Station, to endeavour, that *God's Will* may in some Degree *be done,* and His Praise resounded in *Earth, as it is in Heaven;* and to make Our Devotions bear some sort of Likeness to *Theirs?* These Helps and Incitements to a Religious Fervour have been greatly esteem'd by the Best of Men in all Ages. The celebrated Songs of
Moses

Moses are an abundant Proof of This — A Service so Pleasing to God, that One of them was order'd to be Sung by the Children of *Israel* in all their Generations; Another is represented as yet making up a Part of the Adorations us'd in Heaven. If *Moses* begin His Song with — *I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumph'd gloriously* — *Miriam* and her Followers with their *Timbrels* in their *Hands*, with the same Pious Warmth, and in the same Holy Accents redouble — *Sing Ye unto the Lord, for He hath triumph'd gloriously.*

If we bring This Matter lower, We find, That Great Master of Devotion, the *Man after God's own Heart*, even when as yet there was no Temple, composing Great Variety of Psalms for the Publick Service, and instructing no less than *two Hundred fourscore and Eight Persons* in the Use of 'em, as 'tis exprest — *for Song in the House of the Lord, with Cymbals, Psalteries, and Harps for the Service of the House of God.*

When the Temple was Dedicated, we have a most Surprising Account of the Musical Performances, with which That Service was attended. With the *two Hundred fourscore and eight* mention'd before, were *an Hundred and twenty Priests sounding with Trumpets.* 'Tis very remarkable, how God declar'd His Acceptance of This (almost Angelical) Consort, by an Immediate and Extraordinary Manifestation of His Glory and Presence. No Description of Humane Composition can be lively enough to raise in You an Idea of It. The Account, that God Himself gives of It, is most Magnificent and Affecting,

2 Chr. 5. 13. ——— It came to pass, as the Trumpeters and Singers were as One, to make One Sound to be heard in Praising and Thanking the Lord; and, when they lift up their Voice with Trumpets and Cymbals and Instruments of Musick, ——— that THEN the House was filled with a Cloud, even the House of the Lord, ——— So that the Priests could not stand to minister by reason of the Cloud, for the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of God.

If the Prayers and Praises, we have been now Offering to God, be but an Imperfect Representation of the Awfull Solemnity, I have been mentioning; yet, if they have been accompanied with Sincerity and Fervour, we have reason to believe, They are Graciously and Favourably accepted, and that *the Glory of the Lord* has in some Degree and Measure fill'd This House. May the Work of Piety of This Day engage Us to a greater Regard to the House of God, to a more frequent Attendance on the Publick Service, to a Warmer and more Inflam'd Devotion in it, to an Imitation of the Angelical Choir in their Purity, as well as Worship, in Their Love of God, and of One another; and, whilst we are Singing *Glory to God in the Highest*, let us Promote That Glory, by endeavouring to attain *Peace on Earth*, and by Professing, and on all Occasions being ready to Testify our *Good Will towards Men*.

St



St MARK IV. 28.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of her self, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.



OUR Blessed Lord, the Author of Nature, *without whom was not any thing made, that was made*, in comparing *Spiritual things* with Sensible ones, has in frequent instances shadow'd out the different states and periods of His Kingdom from the resemblance, they bear to the several degrees, by which the *fruits of the earth* advance to their ripeness and perfection. Thus He compares the *world*, the Scene of His Spiritual productions, to a *field*; the labours of the first planters of Christianity to That of *the sower*; the Gospel to *the seed*; the springing of it up to *the blade*; it's farther progress to *the ear*; it's arrival to it's design'd growth to *the full corn in the ear*; it's perfect ripeness to *the fruit*; it's hindrances and

Serm. II. obstru-

obstructions to *the tares*; it's glorious consummation to *the harvest*; the Ministers imploy'd in gathering together *His Elect* to *the Reapers*; the final separation of good and bad men to *the binding up the Sheaves*; and Himself to *the Lord of the Harvest*.

He observes in this Parable, that this *good seed*, when it had taken root, would fill the Land; that His *field* was like *the earth*, which brought forth fruit of herself; and that, as 'tis there express'd, whether *the Husbandman slept, or rose*, the Seed spring's, and grow's up, *he knoweth not how*; intimating, that this prodigious increase of the Gospel (which, He say's, can't so properly be compar'd to any thing, as to *the least of All Seeds*, becoming *the greatest of All Herbs*) was not to be the effect of humane care or vigilance; — the Seed would *spring and grow up, we know not how*; and, that therefore we must ascribe All the success, it should ever meet with in the world, to the Same Hand, which first caus'd, and still *blesseth the Increase of it*.

And with many such Parables (as the Evangelist concludes this Account) *spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it*, leading 'em to the knowledge of the sublimest Truths by things obvious to their Senses, and within the reach of their daily Observation.

Thus, as *Solomon*, an inspired Preacher, had sent us for instruction to the Granary of *the Ant*, one of the smallest and most neglected of the Animated Creation, had bid us *Consider her ways*, and learn *wisdom* from her foresight; Our Blessed Saviour, a *Greater than Solomon*, brings us to
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a yet lower Class in the School of Nature, to Creatures below Those of Sense and Breath; to *the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear, and the fruit* — shewing us, that *He hath given the Earth to the Children of Men* for Their Instruction, as well as for Their Supply; and teaching us to refer all our observations on Natural things to His Honour, who has *created all things, and, for whose pleasure and Glory they are, and were created.*

As the Intention of the Church in appointing the Festival of ROGATION-SUNDAY, and the three ensuing FASTS, is declared (in the Homily for this Season) to be — most principally to laud and thank Almighty God for his great benefits, by beholding the Fields replenished with all manner of fruit, to the maintenance of our corporal necessities, for our food and sustenance; and — to make our humble suits in prayers to his Fatherly providence, to conserve the same fruits in sending us seasonable Weather, whereby we may gather in the said Fruits, to that end, for which his Fatherly goodness had provided them: — I hope, it will not be foreign to the Design of this Ancient and Pious Institution, if I take occasion from these words to point out some of those Religious Uses, to which the consideration of the Growth and Increase of the Fruits of the Earth may be apply'd. And these I shall reduce to the following particulars:

I, That we should hence be often led to reflect on the extreme Change of our condition

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- Since the Fall of our First Parents, and to enquire into the Cause of it.

II^{ly}, We should be hence led to contem-plate the Wisdom and Power of God.

III^{ly}, We should hence learn to admire and acknowledge the Bounty and Goodness of God. And

IV^{thly}, We should hence learn the Duty of depending on Providence.

And hence then in the

I. First place, We should be often led to reflect on the extreme Change of our Condition since the Fall of our First Parents, and to enquire into the Cause of it.

Whilst Man remain'd in a State of Obedience, Labour was easy, and Art superfluous. God Himself planted, watered, and gave the Increase. Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree, that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. And there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. The Almighty Designer blest His own Productions, view'd the Workmanship of His hands with delight, saw every thing, that He had made, and behold, it was very good, the Earth and it's Inhabitants equally answering the End, for which each of 'em were created; the natural fruitfulness of the One, rewarding the ready and willing Obedience of the Other. Then it was, that fruitful seasons knew no interruption; Fear had not yet taken place in the world; Vicissitude, change

change, and disappointment were things unknown. Every thing fully answer'd the Will of God, and the Desire of Man. The Earth had receiv'd a Blessing and a Command, and did Itself in some sense *set forth* it's Maker's Praise, as it *fulfill'd His Word*. Enjoyn'd by the Law of the Creation to *bring forth grass, and the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind*. It paid a constant, tho' constrain'd Obedience to It's Creator. And, tho' indeed it can't be said to have been an Agent, yet it was a principal Instrument of advancing God's Honour, as it administred to it's happy and innocent Natives incessant occasions of adoring the Bounty, the Wisdom, the Power of That Great Creator, who out of the same Materials could form Them, and every thing, they wanted, gave 'em *all things richly to enjoy*, who, without Rain, could send 'em *fruitfull Seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness*. There it was, that They might *tast, and see, how gracious the Lord is*, reap the fruits and effects of His Bounty reach't out in abundant plenty and profusion, and liberally indulg'd to 'em, but with One single Reserve and Limitation. *Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat* — to prove the Bounty, the Tenderness, the All-Sufficiency of thy Maker; *But of the tree of Knowledge thou shalt not eat* — to assert His Sovereignty, and make a Tryal of thy Obedience. *In the day, that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die* — to secure His Laws from contempt, and vindicate His Justice; to prevent thy falling, or render thy Fall inexcusable. Thus did This Mercifull
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and Just Lawgiver guard and fence His Original Prohibition with a dreadfull Threat and Sanction, that there might be no Motive wanting to restrain His Creatures from transgressing the Bounds and Limits of their Duty; and, that, in case of their Fall, no Imputation might lye upon Him, whose Goodness fully forewarn'd them of, what His Power and Justice would as certainly execute: — *that God might be righteous, and All Men Sinners; that God might be justified in his saying, and Man might appear guilty, when he is judged.*

Happy had it been for Them, happy for All Mankind, if this Solemn Threat had had it's due effect and influence upon 'em. But upon their violating this single Test of their Obedience, and only Condition of their Happiness, the Face of things was quite alter'd. The Ground, which had been before blest for the use of Man, was now laid under a Malediction and *Anathema* on His account — *Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Instead of trees good for food, and pleasant to the sight, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, (the former natural Produce of the earth) now — Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee,* Says his justly incens'd Maker. In the place of that liberal Indulgence — *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,* now he is commanded to *eat the herb of the field.* Instead of gathering with ease, and enjoying with pleasure the Spontaneous productions of the Garden, now — *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.* And lastly — *Instead of the mist, that went up from*
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the earth, to water the whole face of the ground, to preserve an exact and due temperament with regard to heat and moisture, he now sees his hope blasted, and his labour render'd ineffectual by scorching heats, and untimely and excessive rains; by the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, which are call'd in Scripture God's Armys, as being sent to vindicate the Cause of the Almighty, and to remind us of the first transgression; and which, in pursuance of that Commission, do often each of them successively eat, and destroy, what the other has left.

The thorn and the thistle, the labour and sweat annex't by our Great Creator to the punishment of tilling the ground, till we return to It, and which labour too is very often not repaid, but with disappointment — These should often put us upon reflecting, how grievous the nature of Sin is, one single Act of which deriv'd a common Curse upon the earth, and it's Inhabitants, drove the Man out of Paradise, placed a Guard of Cherubims, and a flaming Sword at the entrance, and brought the Sentence of Sorrow and Death into the world.

*In pursuance of this Just Doom, the ground still stands a Monument of God's fix'd hatred and aversion to Sin; but Man, thro' the Divine Mercy, has had his Sentence graciously mitigated, and the most dreadfull part of it totally repeal'd, on these easy conditions, that He will sue out, and make proper application for his pardon, in lamenting the past Sin, and resolving against future ones. That most tremendous Threat — *In the day, that thou eatest there-**

therof, Thou shalt surely dye, remains in full force against every Son of *Adam*, with regard to our returning to the *dust*, from whence we were taken; but, in the higher and worse sense of the words, 'tis exchang'd into a solemn Assurance from the Same Law-giver, that — *He, that believeth in Him, shall never die.* We can't indeed by all our labour deliver the earth from that irretrievable Curse, it lyes under, nor our selves from being fated to eat of it in sorrow, and to return to it by death; but, which is infinitely more desireable, we may, by sincere endeavours of our Own, and the efficacious Merit of Another, repair the breaches, and restore the Decays of our fallen Nature — by copying, as near as we can, the Righteousness and Obedience of the *Second Adam*, as we have partaken of, and too closely copied after the Transgression of the *First*.

2. Secondly, We should be hence led to contemplate the Wisdom and Power of God. The surprizing and beautifull Variety, that is seen in the Vegetable World, is an abundant demonstration, that it's contrivance is from Infinite Wisdom, and the effecting it from Almighty Power. The Works of Nature do no where more plainly confess their Author, than in the orderly and regular Succession of these Productions, which make their Annual Returns as duly, as the *Moon and Stars fulfill their Courses.* Thus the Earth (as well as the *Heavens*) declares the Glory of God, and shows forth His Handy-work. The Lower World is exactly observant of those Laws, which the Great Author of Nature has pre-

prescribed it; and, if it does immediately derive an Influence from the Celestial Bodies, as the Instrumental Cause of it's Productions, yet this great Effect must be tract up to a Higher Agent, whose Hand gave the Impression, whose Providence still directs the Operation, and, who do's as really *humble Himself*, when He *behold's the Sun shining in his Strength*, as, when He *clothes the grass of the field*. All the Works of Nature stand in an equal degree of esteem with God, — as He *makes* (in This sense too) *the small and the great, and careth for all alike*. Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea the stars are not pure in his sight. These Bodies, tho' more glorious in their Appearance, yet owe their Origin to the same Cause, and were made to conduce to the same end with the minutest herb, which, equally with them, demonstrates the Power and Wisdom, and as loudly speaks the Praises of it's Creator. *O Lord, how manifold are Thy Works*, says the Psalmist, *in Wisdom hast thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches*. And our Saviour Himself condescends to form a noble Moral and Deduction from the Beauty of the Lillies of the field, which, He says, are *array'd in greater Pomp, than ever Solomon was in all his glory*. He tells us, that they are of *God's clothing*, the Objects of His Care and Providence; and thence concludes, that We, for whose Instruction and Pleasure These were created, are much more so. Thus the lively Colours of a Flower are made to correct the Pride and State of a Prince; as they surpass It in Beauty, and resemble It in Duration; and we at the same time are taught

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to look up for all things necessary, to the same hand, which put on It's delightfull garniture. Thus Noble a Lesson do's the consideration of these (esteem'd inconsiderable) Works of Nature inculcate to us. These, like the other *visible* parts of the Creation, lead us to the knowledge of Him, that is *invisible*; They shew us, that His Power and Wisdom, even in the minutest Productions, confound all the Art and Skill of Man; and, that His Providence, like *His Mercy*, is over all *His Works*, not limited or confin'd to, what we vainly think to be of moment and consequence, but, that *the grass of the field* (as well as a *sparrow* and the *hairs of our head*) is *not forgotten before God*, but is always under His Cognisance and Inspection. *Thus O mist of our*
3. *Thirdly*, We should learn hence to admire the Bounty and Goodness of God: *How vile sup*
 To God Almighty has not debarr'd even fallen Man from any pleasures, but such, as are hurtfull and destructive to Himself. There are rational and innocent Delights, which are above the tast of an Epicure. To read the Goodness of God in the Book of Nature, here open'd wide and display'd to our View, to see the *riches* of His *Liberality* in the abundant Plenty of vegetable productions, to observe more curiously the successive gradations, by which (as our Saviour says) *a grain of mustard-seed grew, and waxed a great tree* — These are gratifications, beyond that of sinfull pleasure. This is a Subject fit to exercise the enquiry of a *Solomon*, and this enquiry is mention'd in Scripture, as a proof of His Wisdom — that *He spake of Trees, from*
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the Cedar-tree, that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyssop, that springeth out of the Wall. How gracious is our mercifull Creator in leading us to the knowledge of Himself by steps so delightful and pleasant; in affording us entertainments, that neither cloy in their use, nor leave any nauseousness or disgust upon the reflection; which, whilst they innocently gratify the Senses, at the same time highly improve the Soul!

What Wonder and Gratitude should fill our minds, when we consider, with what prodigious plenty our labours are crown'd, with how disproportionate an increase they are repaid, by that liberal and open hand, that *giveth grass to the cattel, and green herb for the service of men,* and makes *the valleys laugh and sing* under their burden! Thus *He filleth all things living with plenteousness,* furnisheth us with, whatever is necessary for our support and our refreshment, with *wine to cheer, and bread to strengthen the heart of man,* from that *earth, which is full of His riches,* and observant of His Will. To subdue the earth was made the Duty and the Privilege of Man after the Fall. It had lost it's former natural fertility, but that Loss was to be in a great measure repair'd by Art and Labour, and these to be repaid with Plenty and Increase. Thus *He hath given the earth to the children of men,* and therein a Provision sufficient for all His Creatures; a Provision so ample, to answer the wants and necessities of our State, that, as the Apostle says of the *Manna*, — *He, that gathereth least, hath no lack.*

4. *Fourthly*, We should hence learn the Duty of depending on Providence.

What *St Paul* says in the Allusive, is true in the Literal sense of the Words — that, *neither is he, that planteth, any thing, neither he, that watereth, but God, that giveth the increase*. The Divine Justice has decreed, that Success shall not always attend our Labours; as 'tis entirely owing to God's Goodness, that it ever do's. Art and Industry are encourag'd to hope for, but not entitled to demand a Blessing. Humane endeavours are requisite conditions, but not necessary causes of Plenty. When God, even Our God, gives us His Blessing, 'tis then only, that *the earth brings forth her increase*. 'Tis He, that *watereth her furrows*; and, whose Clouds drop *fateness*; and, who either sends His Blessing to excite our Gratitude, or withholds it to secure our Dependence. *Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have Olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thy self with Oyl; for thine Olive shall cast his fruit — because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things*, says God to the Jews. — And again He threatens them, that, because they *did not know, that 'twas He, that gave 'em their Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, therefore He would take away His Corn in the time thereof, and His Wine in the season thereof, and would recover His Wooll and His Flax, i. e. He would make 'em sensible of their Dependence upon Him, by withdrawing those Blessings, of*
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which They would not acknowledge the Receipt. *The Dew of Heaven*, that softens and impregnates the earth, the *Blasting and Mil-dew*, that destroy it's fruits; the *small rain*, and the *great rain of His strength*, which God causeth to come, whether for *Correction* or for *Mercy*, are each of 'em Instruments in His Hand, severally used; as He sees either of 'em necessary, to bring about the same end. — to warn us not to Hope for, nor to Fear any thing, but from His Favour, or His Displeasure; to use our endeavours with chearfulness, to expect the event of 'em with resignation, to bear even the disappointment with submission. Thus, like *the Husbandman* mention'd by *St James*, we must wait for the precious fruits of the earth, and have long patience for it, untill we receive the early and the latter rain, resting humbly assured, that, if God sees it fit for us, in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. But, if the Success do not answer our hopes, or reward our labour, we must remember, that the *Thorn* and *Thistle*, the Produce of the First Sin, have taken deep root; lament the Cause, but still bless the Author of our Misfortunes; acknowledge His Justice, and humbly rely on His future Goodness and Blessing. To this purpose we have a most beautiful, and instructive passage in the Prophet *Habakkuk*, c. 3. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoyce in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

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I shall but just mention one more religious Use, that may be drawn from this Subject, which I could not wholly pass by, because it is found in so many of the Inspired Writers; and That is, that hence we ought frequently to reflect, how fading and transient all earthly Enjoyments are. The History even of Man's Rise and Fall is compris'd by *Job* in a few words — *He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower.* If this comparison gratify his Vanity from the beauty of the emblem, under which he is represented, it however mortifies and checks his Pride, from the consideration, that That beauty is of short continuance; and that, as *St James* says — *The grace of the fashion of it perisheth.* If no unkind Blast prevent his arriving to maturity, some sudden Accident may anticipate and hasten his decay; but even, *if he live out all his days, and wither, before he be pluck't up,* he flourisheth but one short season — *he cometh up, and is cut down.*

Give me leave to add to this Reflection, that, as the shortness and uncertainty of our lives is frequently shadow'd out in Scripture in being compar'd to those Vegetables, which soonest fade and wither; so in the vegetable world too, we find abundant arguments, which do, not obscurely, intimate to us, I don't say, the Certainty, but the Possibility of a Resurrection. In the course of these natural things, we know, that Corruption and Decay is the very Seed and Principle of Life. 'Tis the Apostle's own Reasoning, — *That, which thou sowest, is not quickned, except it die:* and our Saviour's — *Except*
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a Corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. The Alteration, Disunion, and Dissolution of it's parts, is no bar, but the only means possible of it's revival and growth. The Divine Power, that from a Seed, divested of the Form it had, when it was thrown into the ground, can raise a Plant of the same kind and nature, is as well able, with regard to Us, to *raise in Incorruption* that, which was *sown in Corruption*, and to *give to every seed his own body.* But the Doctrine of the Resurrection has a firmer Foundation, than These Hints taken from the Book of Nature. I only argue thus far, that Those, who deny the Possibility of it from the pretended Difficulties, see things every day in fact, which are equally Unaccountable. And I shall only add upon This Subject, that the Production of every the meanest herb, and much more the *Renewal* of the whole *Face of the Earth* at every Return of the Spring, is as much above the Understanding of the Philosopher, as the Resurrection exceeds the Faith of the Sadducee.

That these or the like Pious Sentiments would naturally arise from a serious Attention to the Wonders of the vegetable Creation, may be collected from Our Saviour's Own Direction to Us ——— to *consider the Lillies, how they grow*; to reflect on their Origin, Growth, and Increase, but so, as not to forget their Author; to *consider* them, not barely for Delight, or Amusement, but to a Religious End and Purpose. Were this usefull Study pursu'd, Did the Husbandman, with *Isaac*, go out into the field to meditate,

ditate, how would the Punishment of *tilling the ground* be improv'd into the greatest Blessing; when *He, that reapeth*, would, in the midst of his laborious employment, be *receiving wages, and gathering fruit unto life eternal*; and both *He, that soweth, and He, that reapeth*, might *rejoyce together*; — with a Joy exceeding the joy in *Harvest*!

Indeed these Reflections are no where so likely to be cultivated and improv'd, as in such places of Privacy and Retirement. *There was a Garden, to which Jesus oft-times had resorted with His Disciples* (no doubt, greatly to Their Spiritual Benefit and Instruction) and, which He last made choice of for His Own Sublime Devotions. Such a place, whilst it gives us the opportunity of Retreat and Abstractedness, might at the same time Suggest to Us proper matter both of Humiliation and Encouragement, if consider'd as the Scene of the two most memorable Events, that ever happen'd in the World; — as a Place, where *the First Adam* committed His Sin; and, whither *the Second* retir'd, to begin the *Agony*, that was to Attone for it; to bear, and to remove It's dreadfull Consequences. But we must remember, that, unless the Mind be always on it's guard, perpetually full of the Sense of the Divine Inspection, and constantly Imploping the Divine Assistance, the *Enemy* will rejoyce to *sow tares* in a Soil so proper to receive the *good seed*; and we may be said to be *in perils* (where even our Lord Himself was *tempted*) *in the Wilderness*. If we strive to *hide ourselves from the Presence of the Lord God among the Trees* of

of the Garden, if we don't consider Him as Near us, and Ourselves as always in His View, *the Serpent*, the *Subtillest* of All *Beasts*, is but too likely to surprise us, to tempt, and endanger us by that ensnaring Suggestion — *Ye shall not surely dye*. Let us therefore in our Solitude call in the Divine Aid, and pray, that He, that *spieth out All our Ways*, would likewise order All our Steps; that we may innocently enjoy, and moderately use the Blessings and Delights, He has so plentifully indulg'd us; but strictly abstain from coming near the *Tree*, of which He has commanded us — *Ye shall not eat*.

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